

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Kame Okano, 92, coffee farmer

"Coffee is a small fruit, you see, so we had to get up early in the morning and pick the little things, one at a time. Sometimes we'd get one bag in one day, sometimes we'd pick two bags. We'd save that up for three days and then grind it. Run it through a machine and grind it. Then we'd mix it with water, and the next morning we'd wash it and put it on the drying racks to dry for about a week . . . Because it was back then and the [coffee] price was so low, it was hard to save money, but we picked coffee with all our might."

Kame Okano was born on February 9, 1889, in Yamaguchi-ken, Japan. She had three older brothers. Her parents, Take and Kashichi Tanaka, were rice farmers.

Kame married Waichi Okano (age 29) in 1907 and came to Hawaii on the Hong Kong Maru. After a few days in Honolulu, they came to Kona, where they picked coffee, worked in the sugarcane fields, and raised tobacco. After a couple of years, they farmed coffee on leased lands in Honalo. In the 1940s, Kame and Waichi purchased coffee lands in Keauhou where they continued farming for the next three decades.

Kame, an honorary advisor of the Kona Daifukuji Fujinkai, is a member of the Keauhou Kumi and Yamaguchi Kenjinkai.

Although she has had to work hard all her life, Kame believes that it was "good" that she came to Hawaii, "good" for her family. She is the mother of 11 children (three of whom are now deceased), grandmother to 18, and great-grandmother to 23.

Tape No. 9-8-1-80 TR
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kame Okano (KO)

November 1, 1980

Keauhou, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Faye Komagata (FK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by
Paul Scott Lehman.]

FK: When is your birthday, Okano-san?

KO: My birthday was in 1889.

FK: I see. What month?

KO: February--I think--because it was the second month.

FK: On what date?

KO: The ninth.

FK: Where were you born? Where was your family home?

KO: Ono Village, Asa County, Yamaguchi Prefecture.

FK: Let's talk about your family now. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

KO: There were four of us.

FK: Did you have sisters? Brothers?

KO: Three older brothers and then me. Four children.

FK: What did you do when you were little?

KO: When I was little, because we were farmer's children we went out into the fields and paddies and worked with our father.

FK: What was the village like?

KO: It was up in the mountains.

FK: Was it a big village?

KO: It was small--a small village.

FK: What kind of house did you have?

KO: The house? This was in Japan, so all up above was covered with rice stalks. There was some kind of rope. They would take all the rice off and use the stalks of the rice plants to cover the roof.

FK: Was it the same in summer and in winter?

KO: Yes, it was the same in both summer and winter. No matter how much rain fell it was all right.

FK: What about the food you ate?

KO: For food in Japan, we would always take wheat and rice and cook them together and eat wheat-rice.

FK: What about vegetables and things like that?

KO: Well, because we grew vegetables in the mornings we would always have wheat-rice and miso soup and kōkō. In the mornings that was all. In Japan the vegetables were poor. We didn't eat good things very much.

FK: What about at noon and in the evening?

KO: At noon and in the evening I would make boiled fish or vegetables and kōkō. Kōkō we would have three times a day. Takuwan and like that, that's kōkō. We would make all that from vegetables. We would grow the daikon during the summer and then pickle enough of them in a big barrel to last us a year.

FK: So you made it yourself? At home?

KO: Yes. After drying the ones we had grown in our own garden, we would put them in a big barrel and pickle them in salted rice bran paste. And every day for a year, we would take some out and eat it.

FK: What about meat and fish and things like that?

KO: In the old days in Japan, we might get some fish occasionally, but we didn't eat meat. My father had a cow--not a cow, a horse. He would clear the fields with the horse. What you call plowing over here--he would use the horse to do that. He would say, "The horse is a valuable thing, so you should never kill it and eat it." So he would never let us eat any meat. Other families would eat it sometimes, but we never did. Our father wouldn't let us eat any.

FK: How did you get money?

KO: Money? For money, we would have one year's worth of rice--thirty or forty bags full--all neatly stacked up; and when we sometimes needed money, we would go to town and sell some. We would put them on the horse two by two and go to town and get some money and buy sugar and iriko and things like that.

FK: Compared with the people in the neighborhood, how was it in your household? With regards to things like the house, the food, and the work?

KO: It was mostly the same thing everywhere--because we were farmers--just growing rice and wheat.

FK: When you were little you went to school, didn't you? . . . Which school was it?

KO: It was the Ono Village Primary school.

FK: Was it in the village?

KO: Yes. They would come from villages all around to one place. It went from primary school all the way up to the secondary level. Primary school was four years and secondary was four years--eight years. I only went for six years.

FK: What sort of things did they teach at school?

KO: At school we had reading and writing, morals, arithmetic, and physical education. That was about all, I think. There were quite a number of things, but I don't remember very well now.

FK: What about the teachers?

KO: There were five or six teachers.

FK: Were they people who had graduated from there, too?

KO: The teachers had all graduated from middle school or normal school, so some came from over here and some came from over there. You couldn't be a teacher unless you had graduated from school. They had graduated from middle and normal school.

FK: Of the things you studied, which did you dislike the most?

KO: Well, there wasn't really anything that I didn't like.

FK: Which was best?

KO: The one I liked the most was arithmetic. I liked that the best. I was best at that. Whenever we would do sums like this, I would always be in the top two or three in the class. I liked that the best. (Laughs)

FK: You only went for six years. How did you feel about that? Did you want to go a little longer?

KO: I wanted to go a little longer, but my older sister [sister-in-law] had a baby and they needed someone to care for it. So even though I wanted to go [to school], there was nothing I could do, so I quit. If I didn't stay home and take care of the baby, my sister couldn't work outside, so I quit school and stayed home to keep the baby. I wanted to go [to school] for another two years, but I quit.

FK: How old were you in comparison to your brothers and sisters?

KO: Me? I was the youngest. Three older brothers, and then me.

FK: How would you help out each day around the house?

KO: Well, every day that there was work outside, I would go outside and work. When there wasn't any outside work, there was a place where they taught sewing that I went to from about the time I was 12 or 13 [years old] until I got married. Every time there was some sewing, I would go there and learn. I sewed montsuki and all kinds of things.

FK: Did you do the cooking at home, too? Did you prepare the meals?

KO: Meals? You mean cook? Mostly my older sister did it--my older brother's wife. Because our mother had died when I was four, my older brother had taken a wife early and they had raised me like I was their child.

FK: So how many were there in your household?

KO: There were the four of us [children], and my older brother's wife made five, and my father made six. Six people.

FK: Was your house big?

KO: Yes, well, it was big enough.

FK: When there wasn't anything to do, what would you do to play? Would you play outside . . . when you had free time?

KO: Sometimes. We would play at New Year's. On New Year's Day--we would play for about three days straight. And then at Tenchō-setsu, Bon, tango [-no-sekku], and [festival] times like that, the children would all gather and play.

FK: Would you get dressed up at New Year's?

KO: At New Year's--the big thing from about the twenty-ninth [of December] was the mochi pounding. We would pound about one bag of mochi and put big pieces like this up on the shelf to dry. We would put it all in bags and like so. Then we would get some out from time to time and cook and eat it.

FK: You pounded it at home?

K0: Yes, we would pound it at home.

FK: When you played, what sort of games would you play?

K0: Oh, when we played--there was a shrine there, a shrine like Izumo Shrine--five or six of my friends would just go there and talk about this and that. And play like that.

FK: Did you have balls or toys or anything like that?

K0: We didn't have anything like that. Sometimes, if it was New Year's, we would play with iroha cards or something.

FK: Were there other relatives there? Did you sometimes do things together with your relatives?

K0: Yes. In Japan the shrines each had their own festival. For the one where we lived there was a festival from the night of October 17th through the 18th. So we would have something special to eat and all the relatives would be invited and would come and stay overnight. The next day we would make sushi and give it to them as a present to take back home. So if there were three or four in the other person's family and maybe only two had come, then they would take the presents back home and give them to the people who had stayed behind and hadn't gone. So that's the way it was here and there, about once each year.

FK: So you couldn't see them very often?

K0: Yes. We would look forward to it.

FK: Were there any other festivals?

K0: The only other festival was--there's a place called Izumo Taihei there, and on the 15th of October or so everyone from the area would go there. Everyone would wear their best kimono. It was a special treat. They would make a specially pretty kimono from beforehand and keep it to wear when they went to the shrine.

FK: Would you wear any cosmetics at those times?

K0: Naturally everyone would try and be as pretty as they could when they went.

FK: Your face--would you use any cosmetics on your face?

K0: Yes. Back then we would use face powder, because it was when we were young, you see.

FK: Would you also go to the temple?

- KO: We would go to the temple very often. In December we would have Hōonkō for a week. So every day around 2 or 3 o'clock [p. m.] all the farmers from the houses around there would go to the temple. It was a great enjoyment for both the old folks and the young people to hear the sermons of the monk at the temple. That would last a week and we would go every day.
- FK: What did you think of those festival times and such? You must have enjoyed them . . .
- KO: Yes. The festivals were a treat. Also, at the temple, hearing the sermons of the monk and after we had been there to pay respect to our ancestors, everyone felt like they should do good deeds.
- FK: Were there any big events when you were a child? Do you remember . . . any big events?
- KO: There was a very big event. When I was little our place was by the river. There was a river out behind us. And when it rained the river would come rushing by, and the water would rise.
- Well, I went there with my one younger [brother]--he died, but there was one boy [brother] younger than me. It had been raining and we went down the steps to the river and were washing, but there were these tiny shrimp there by the rocks. So the younger one and I were trying to catch them when he suddenly slipped and fell and was swept right away.
- My mother was just nearby doing the laundry, so I shouted, "Mother! Benzo fell in." So she heard me and went running and caught him way downstream. She ran way down and then went in and carried him back. He had swallowed some water, so we built a fire and warmed him up; but that was the start of the trouble, I think. He was all right for a little while after that, but didn't live much longer before he died. I think that was the trouble. It was when I was little, so I don't remember clearly, but it was a harrowing time . . .
- Sometimes we would go play up on this little hill and my brother would say, "Sister, let me down. Please let me down," but I wouldn't let him down.
- So then my mother would come and say, "Why won't you let him down when he's crying so much and saying he wants to be let down." I felt badly to have done something like that when I was little.
- FK: What about in society? Were there any big events? Wars or . . .
- KO: Yes. There were wars. When we were little there was the Sino-Japanese War. That was in the 27th or 28th year of Meiji [1894 or 1895]. It was called the Sino-Japanese War--when Japan went to China and made war. Some people went to war and died; and some came back safely. My cousin went to war, but he came back home safely. And then after that, just briefly, there was one called

the Northern Chinese War [Boxer Rebellion]. And then there was the Russo-Japanese War. The war between Japan and China was a big war. It was lucky that Japan was somehow able to win.

FK: Did it also affect the village? Did it affect your home, too?

KO: In the village during wartime everyone was worried as to what would happen. In Japan, if you were a man you had to go for a military conscription physical exam when you were 21 [years old]. They would go for the conscription physical and have their physical condition checked. If it was good you were eligible, and if you eligible you had to go to the army no matter what. If you passed, you had to go. If you were too short or your body was weak then you wouldn't be eligible--you'd be ineligible.

Everyone gladly went if they were eligible. Everyone was happy to go be a soldier. My older brother went in the navy and my cousin went in the army. It wasn't like here where you can say, "If I go into the army I shall die, so I won't volunteer." You couldn't do that. You had to go no matter what. Everyone went gladly, though. To serve the country everyone went gladly.

Even here [Hawaii/U. S.] in the beginning--at the time of the first war [WW I] everyone went, right? Even Hiroshi, who was still a twelfth-grader, volunteered and went off [to WW II]. They all were so happy and went like they were going off to play somewhere. Everyone volunteered. Now if you talk about that, everybody no like because they'll die. The whole world is changing now.

FK: When you were young you must have thought about a lot of things, but what did you want to be when you grew up? What did you want to do?

KO: Nothing special, really . . . I thought I would get married off and have to go live someplace.

FK: You said something the other day about disliking farm work though, didn't you?

KO: I disliked farming. I wanted to go someplace where there was a store or something where they didn't farm. But there just wasn't any store who would take me (chuckle)--there wasn't anyplace to go. One of my cousins was the wife of Okano's older brother though. And since she was there, she got them to take me. After Okano had gone to the Russo-Japanese War and come back, he wanted to come to Hawaii, but he couldn't come alone. You had to be a married couple or you couldn't come. [So my sister-in-law said,] "Why don't you have him marry my cousin and let them go to Hawaii?" So Okano married me and that was how we were able to come to Hawaii.

FK: Did you want to come to Hawaii?

KO: Yes. I thought Hawaii would probably be a good place and came gladly--and it was a good place after all.

FK: What had you heard about Hawaii?

KO: About Hawaii? Well, when we got to Hawaii we intended to make money, and then after ten years--when we had made lots of money--we would go back home to Japan. But then the children--one the first year, two the second year--until there were eight. We couldn't make much money, just enough to eat properly. Since we couldn't go home to Japan, we decided that we would just have to stay in Hawaii all our lives, and we bought some good land.

FK: What did your father think when you came to Hawaii?

KO: When we left I said to my father, "We'll go stick it out for ten years or so and then come back home with the money, so please stay here in good health until then." But then we never went back, and then my father died. My father was waiting for me to come home.

FK: How did you feel when you left Japan?

KO: Well, when we left Japan--when we said good-bye to everyone, we just said that we'd be back in ten years with money, and it would be all right, so I didn't cry very much. We intended to go right back home with the money. (Laughs)

FK: Before you came to Hawaii you made all kinds of preparations, didn't you?

KO: Yes. Before coming to Hawaii, I got married in February and would go to the doctor every time for treatment of my eyes. I would go every week or so and have some eye medicine put in. Because if your eyes weren't good you wouldn't be eligible [to go to Hawaii]. So I had eye medicine put on from about February--March--April--uh, up until we came over [to Hawaii] I went to the doctor sometimes.

FK: What about money and the paperwork involved? What did you prepare? The money . . . and such . . .

KO: The money to come over here, right? Back then how much was it now? For one person the fare was--the boat fare was fifty dollars per person, I think. My older brother loaned me the money. I borrowed \$100 or \$200 from my older brother. Out of that I paid the boat fare and the lodging. We stayed at a hotel in Yokohama for a week or ten days. So I paid that, and the boat fare. We came here like that.

But on the way, a person who was with us had gambled and didn't have the money to get to Hilo. So he asked to borrow money and said that he would work and pay us back by-and-by. So we loaned it to him and when we got here we had no more.

FK: How much money was that then?

KO: Back then money was . . . How should I say it? How much was it? It was a long time ago, so everything was cheap. Back then if you

picked coffee and made 50 cents, when you sent it to Japan it was a dollar. Only about double the value, I think, I'm not sure.

FK: What about a passport?

KO: We got passports when we went for our physical examinations in Yokohama. They made up the passport for you at the Yokohama Prefectural Office, or whatever it was. They would make it for you and you showed it at different places along the way. I have it in my trunk even now.

FK: How long did you wait in Yokohama?

KO: We were in Yokohama about two weeks.

FK: Did you have a lot of baggage?

KO: The baggage was--I think--in Japan they have what's called kōri [wicker trunk]. We had two or three of those. We had our clothes and even a red blanket in there. (Laughs) We also had a small futon--a small under-futon and a red blanket. So we came with about three kōri, I think.

FK: Did you have Japanese-style clothes, too?

KO: Yes, we had some Japanese clothes. We brought enough to wear around here. But since nobody wore Japanese clothes over here, we made them over into shirts and wore them.

FK: You came by ship, didn't you? . . .

KO: Yes. It was China Lines' S. S. Hong Kong and took eleven days to get here. Eleven days from Yokohama until it got to Honolulu.

FK: When was that?

KO: It was sometime in August--I don't remember well--I think maybe the 10th or 20th of August--around the middle of August, I think. We got to Honolulu on the 28th of August.

FK: What year?

KO: The year? That would have been 1907--August of 1907.

FK: How old were you?

KO: My age? I came at 18.

FK: You were young, weren't you?

KO: Yes . . . In Japan everyone got married at 17 or 18, you see.

FK: What was the ship like?

K0: The ship was the S. S. Hong Kong and because I was pregnant I was so nauseous. For eleven days I didn't eat anything, I just drank water. When I got off the boat I was dizzy and couldn't walk. Everyone said that since I was pregnant, I must really feel sick. It was rough.

FK: How was the food and the place where you slept?

K0: On the ship? On the ship they had these things like what you would put children in--in rows like silkworm racks. They were all in a row on the ship, one place for each person.

FK: Uh--Stacked up?

K0: Yes. Like this . . . this was where you slept. . . .

FK: A platform--was it a platform?

K0: Yes. Like this. And then above there were two--three levels all along like this. (Gestures) I think there were two or three others up above in the ship.

FK: Was everyone together?

K0: One person to each one . . . One slept in one. There were things like this about half way down on both sides of the bed. It was like this. (Gestures) Here and here--like so. You would pull up here and sleep here. They were called silkworm racks. All the old ships were like that. There weren't any rooms or anything.

FK: So you were with the women?

K0: Yes. The women were in the women's group and the men were in the men's group.

FK: Were there children there, too?

K0: I didn't see many children, though.

FK: What about the food?

K0: They served various kinds of food on the ship, but we never took any of it because we couldn't eat anything. When I took some at first and ate it, I threw it all away. So after that I didn't take anything and just drank water and threw up, drank water and threw up.

FK: Was there any exercise or game . . .

K0: Yes, the weak ones would go up on deck and play a little bit, but the ones who were sick like me couldn't get out of bed at all.

FK: Who took care of you?

KO: Okano came by before long and looked after me. A person who was near me changed places with Okano, who had been someplace else. So he came nearby me and brought me water every time, and would throw away what I had thrown up. It was an awful experience.

FK: What happened when you got to Honolulu? What did you think?

KO: When I got to Honolulu I got a little better, but I had morning sickness. So if I ate a little I would throw up, and I was pretty poorly for another week or two yet.

FK: So your first impression of Hawaii was . . .

KO: I thought Hawaii was a very nice place and came gladly. The climate is good.

FK: How long were you in Honolulu?

KO: I was in Honolulu about ten days, I think. I came on the 28th [of August], I think. But back then there was the boat--the Kinau--that came to Napoopoo, but only once in ten days. So you had to wait ten days if you came after it had left.

FK: Why did you want to come to Kona?

KO: Someone from our neighborhood [in Japan] was in Kona. A person named Hayashi had come to Kona and been there since five or ten years before. He had taken a wife from our place and called her over and the two of them were here--in Honalo, up above Imamoto-san's. That's who we were counting on. They were kind to us there. Then by-and-by we went to Ikeda-san's place.

FK: Was there a place for you when you came? Was there a house where you could stay when you got to Kona?

KO: In Kona, when we got to Napoopoo, no people rode on the boat. Just foodstuffs--rice, wheat, and all kinds of foodstuffs. No people were aboard--just the two of us. So if we were going to Honalo, why didn't we go to Kailua they asked. Going up there would be easy if we went to Kailua, but if we came to Napoopoo it was a long way around from there. But we had come there, and in the letter it had said Kealakekua. So we thought if the hotel was in Kealakekua, then we would pick Napoopoo. But when we came to Napoopoo it was all foodstuffs. We were the only two people. There were all these big men lifting everything into big trucks [wagons] and coming up here to deliver it to the stores. So amidst all those Portuguese and kanaka drivers we wondered and worried about how we would ever go to Honalo. But there was just one Japanese there fortunately for us, so we asked him and got him to hire a carriage with two horses. And they brought us up here by carriage.

FK: Did you pay that person anything?

KO: Yes. We asked him how much we should give him, and he said, "Four dollars and fifty cents." But we didn't have four dollars and fifty cents, we only had four dollars and forty cents. Ten cents no 'nough. We turned our wallet upside down and showed it to him and told him, "No more. Pau." We were short ten cents. But that was all right as far as he was concerned . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

KO: I was in Honolulu about ten days and then I came to Napoopoo. And after coming to Napoopoo, I went to Obayashi-san's place. I finally came here [Keauhou] . . . I came here much later.

FK: No, no. When you got to Kona, where did you go first?

KO: I went to a man named Obayashi's place in Honalo.

FK: Ah-h. And where did you stay at first?

KO: Eh?

FK: Where did you live at first?

KO: Oh, I lived there about half a year, I guess. And then I went to Ikeda-san's place and lived there for about a year.

FK: Did you work from the very beginning?

KO: Yes. I got to Obayashi-san's place right when the coffee was ripe and everyone said I should go pick coffee--that I could make fifty cents a day. And if I sent that fifty cents back to Japan it would be worth a dollar. So I went and picked coffee.

FK: With your husband? Did you pick coffee together?

KO: Uh, well--I would pick coffee. Okano had contracts to do the hō hana at several different coffee patches. Two or three-year contracts, so he would go every day and hō hana.

FK: Do you remember where he did hō hana?

KO: Oh, here and there. People who couldn't do it all themselves would contract it out to someone. So he would go out to do contract work here and there in Honalo.

FK: How long was the contract for? . . .About how long? . . .Until when?

KO: Well, when there was a contract he would do it, but when there wasn't any sometimes he would rest. When there was [work] he would do it, when there wasn't he would rest.

FK: Were you paid in cash?

KO: Yes, it was in cash. And when I went to Ikeda-san's place I worked on his coffee mountain.

FK: What kind of house did you live in?

KO: In Ikeda-san's house--with them.

FK: So you did some of the work around the house, too? You helped out?

KO: Yes. I did work for Ikeda-san, too. If he didn't have any then I would work [somewhere else]. I would get work here and there--wherever it was available--and worked like that.

FK: Were there lots of Japanese around here then?

KO: There were quite a few Japanese, but not that many yet.

FK: So where did you go---whose place did you go to to pick coffee?

KO: There was a person named Mizuta down below Honalo who was alone and couldn't pick it all himself, so I went there to kōkua. And then I would kōkua at Ikeda's. I worked all around.

FK: From what time until what time?

KO: When we picked coffee it was fifty cents a bag--the time didn't matter. For the cane fields it was from 6 [o'clock] in the morning to 4:30 in the evening. For ten hours of work the men got seventy-five cents a day and the women got fifty cents. I did that for a long time.

FK: What did you do when you were through with the coffee?

KO: When the coffee was finished--hō hana. Every time. We would hō hana, or trim the new sprouts on the branches, or prune the branches. After the coffee--we would prune, we would hō hana.

FK: Before that you worked in the coffee land, didn't you? Before you went to the cane fields?

KO: Oh, that was just for a little while.

FK: When you were picking coffee, what time would you go to work in the morning?

KO: Back then--if you didn't leave while it was still dark to go and pick, you wouldn't be able to pick a full bag. You couldn't pick a full bag unless you went very early and stayed very late. From early, from the time it was dark until it got dark again. Our time was full up.

FK: And how many bags did you pick?

KO: One day--one bag. That's what I would do. . . .Yes, one bag. A new man wouldn't be able to pick a full bag. And in the old days, there wasn't as much coffee. Because they couldn't grow the trees as well, and didn't put in any bone meal. The coffee wouldn't bear right--the crop was sparse.

FK: What were the [coffee] trees like? In the old days the trees were different, weren't they?

KO: Yes. They were all pretty thick, so we would bend them over and pick them. Sometimes we would use a ladder to pick the tall ones.

FK: Wasn't it dangerous--climbing up on a ladder? Climbing up and picking?

KO: Well we wouldn't go up where it was dangerous. If there were three steps, we would go up one or two. We wouldn't go to the top. It wouldn't do to fall.

FK: When you would go to pick coffee, was the place decided beforehand? How would you know where to pick?

KO: Obayashi-san, at the house where I was staying, would tell me where the coffee was planted and tell me to go there and pick it. He would take care of that for me and tell me and I would go.

FK: Were you alone or did other people go, too?

KO: Only me, alone. Nobody else would come.

FK: What did you think? Were you lonely?

KO: No. It wasn't lonely.

FK: Did you have any days off?

KO: Well, I would take the day off when there wasn't any work.

FK: What about during the peak season?

KO: During the season I would work most of the time. Before and after, when you couldn't pick a full bag, I would pick one day for fifty cents. Even if I couldn't pick a full bag, and just got a half-bag or so, they would still give me fifty cents when I picked at Ikeda's place.

- FK: What would you do when you only picked a little bit? You wouldn't get much money, would you?
- KO: It couldn't be helped when you could only pick a little bit and they would give me fifty cents--the price for one bag.
- FK: What would you do at night?
- KO: (Laughs) I didn't do anything at night. Only during the day.
- FK: Before coming here and picking coffee you had done farm work in Japan. How was it in comparison? What did you think about coming over here to pick coffee?
- KO: Since you did it with your fingers, picking coffee was easy compared to farm work in Japan.
- FK: So you think [picking] coffee was better?
- KO: Uh-h-h---Hawaii was better after all.
- FK: You received cash [wages], didn't you? Was that every day?
- KO: No, no. Once a month--or else just from the time you started until you finished.
- FK: Compared with other people, was the money you got for picking coffee any different? Was it the same?
- KO: Uh, well, it was the same thing. We would pick coffee and do hō hana here and there to get our food. If there was any left over--when I came over [to Hawaii] I had borrowed two hundred dollars from my older brother and would [send back] a little at a time. (Pause) But they were all small [amounts] . . .
- FK: When you were at Ikeda-san's place did you pay any rent?
- KO: Ikeda-san's place? No, it was free.
- FK: What about food and things like that?
- KO: They would pay me for the days I worked, so I didn't pay any rent. There were the two Ikeda's and the two of us. Because they had a roomy [large] house. It's up above there now--that big house.
- FK: What about water?
- KO: For water there was a cistern. There was a cistern way up above that was full of water. We would lower a bucket in and bring it up and carry it over and put it in a big barrel.
- FK: The house you lived in a Ikeda-san's place--what kind of place was it?

- KO: Uh--Ikeda-san's house is still up there, I think. That's the house. It was a very big house that a kanaka had built in the old days.
- FK: Was it a house made from wood?
- KO: Yes, it was a wooden house. It was made from wood.
- FK: What about the rooms? How many rooms did the house have?
- KO: It had two rooms. One here and one here. Two rooms.
- FK: What about where you slept?
- KO: There was one place--one room. And then there was a kitchen where everyone would cook together--one place.
- FK: What about the floor? [What kind of floor did it have?]
- KO: Yes, there was a floor everywhere. There was an upstairs, too, but they didn't use it at all.
- FK: What would they do with the coffee--the coffee that had been picked?
- KO: You mean when they would make the coffee? Well, they would save up the coffee that had been picked each day for about three days. Some people would pick one bag, some people would pick two bags. They would save that up for about three days and then grind [pulp] it all with a machine.
- FK: At Ikeda-san's place?
- KO: Yes. They would do it at Ikeda-san's place, too. They would do it.
- FK: You didn't do anything like that at the time?
- KO: No, no. When they had coffee I would kōkua. Whenever they had any I would definitely work there.
- FK: Did you do any other things with the Ikedas besides work?
- KO: Well, the Ikedas had their own various [things to do]. She would stay down below, but he would go way up ma uka to cut koa boards.
- FK: When you had free time did you do anything together [with the Ikedas]?
- KO: Nothing--nothing special, really. If there was free time we would rest.
- FK: What was it like around the house?

KO: Around the house was just a regular coffee field, with maybe just a small area for growing vegetables.

FK: How many years were you at Ikeda-san's place?

KO: Oh, I think I was there about two years.

FK: And you just picked coffee all that time?

KO: Yes. Picked coffee and rested when there wasn't any work. Okano would do hō hana, but after he'd done hō hana he would rest when there wasn't any work.

FK: Did you go do hō hana, too?

KO: No, Okano did that. I wouldn't do hō hana very much. Sometimes-- after the people next door had left--I learned how to sew on a machine. I learned how to sew shirts and pants.

FK: Did you have a [sewing] machine?

KO: Yes. The lady next door had a hand machine. It was an old one that you worked by hand. Not a foot machine. You would do it over here like this (gestures) and then turn it with your hand over here.

FK: So you would hold it [the material] in your left hand and turn [the crank] with your right hand? Didn't you also work in the tobacco fields? When was it that you did that?

KO: That was after I had left Ikeda-san's place. When I was at Ikeda-san's place I went to work in the cane fields and when there wasn't any work in the cane fields, I went to work for a tobacco grower for about one year.

FK: Where was that?

KO: They had planted tobacco all along up above Sasaki Store in Keauhou and were growing it.

FK: Did you live there, too?

KO: Yes, I lived there for about a year.

FK: In what sort of house?

KO: Oh, just an old house--built from rough boards. It was sort of a funny two-story house, made from one-by-twelves, I think.

FK: Who was the owner of the land? Who was the boss?

KO: Well, uh--I think--I think the boss was a haole. He was called Mr. Blackwell. A haole man named Mr. Blackwell was growing the tobacco. But unluckily, after having all the coffee fields down

below replanted with tobacco, he went to the Mainland. He was gone a long time, I guess he was important--but then as soon as he got back, he just suddenly up and passed away--died of a heart attack. After that his boy took over, but the money didn't last and they couldn't make it. Money just doesn't last.

FK: What would you do to the tobacco?

K0: The tobacco would all be growing in a row like this, right?
(Gestures) I would take the ones from down below that were starting to wilt--one by one I would take them and . . .

FK: The leaves? . . .

K0: Yes. We would hang them up and dry them.

FK: Then there was a place where they were dried?

K0: There was a big house [building] built for it. A big house where everywhere you looked there were two or three levels with places for drying.

FK: Who did you work with?

K0: There were three Japanese couples there.

FK: Was it by contract?

K0: No, no. Day work. We did it all along as day work. It wasn't by contract. It was day work and three married couples. One day--one dollar. That's what we got. But that [job] was pau after one year.

FK: Did you plant tobacco, too? Plant and take care of everything?

K0: After we had dried the tobacco we would pile it up, but there just wasn't anyone who could grow it right. So it wouldn't come out right. So they gave it up. It was pau.

FK: What did you think of that kind of work? What did you think of tobacco work?

K0: The tobacco that they had specially grown just wouldn't come right--so it was too bad, but there was nothing that could be done, because there wasn't anybody that knew how to grow tobacco properly. The stuff they had specially planted just wouldn't come right. But finally it was all pau. I think they burned it all in the end.

FK: How many acres was it?

K0: Acres? Oh, quite a few. There was quite a bit of it way up where the guava grew.

FK: Was it there from before that?

KO: No, no. Just a year or two--a little over a year.

FK: You were only there for one year, right?

KO: Yes.

FK: What about the other couples?

KO: Everyone was pau there. Everyone went away. Yes, they all bought coffee land and went away.

FK: How long did it take to plant the tobacco?

KO: It took quite a long time, I think. No matter what you do, it still takes about a half-year from the time you plant until it gets big.

FK: What did you do until then?

KO: I did hō hana around the tobacco because the weeds would grow.

FK: Was that one day--one dollar?

KO: One dollar for men. Women got fifty cents, but it was one dollar [for the men].

FK: At that time was that pretty good? Was one dollar--one day pretty good?

KO: That was only where they were growing tobacco, no place else. Only there. It was one dollar.

FK: Was the money too little? Was one dollar--one day too little? Was it enough?

KO: Compared to other places one dollar was good. Other places were seventy-five cents, but there it was one dollar. That's why we picked that place and went there, but there were only three couples there. And then before long the boss died, and it became pau, so it was no good any more.

FK: Where did you go after that?

KO: After that we bought a coffee place in Honalo--we stayed there a long time.

FK: You said something about working in the cane fields a little bit, something about pulapula?

KO: That was before I went to do the tobacco that I worked in the cane fields. That was when I was at Ikeda's. I would do Ikeda's hō hana, and go from there [Ikeda's house] to the cane fields. Back then we

went to the job site at 6 [o'clock] in the morning and were pau hana at 4:30. To get from Ikeda's all the way there--when the days were short, if you didn't leave while it was still dark you wouldn't get there by six. So I would carry a lantern and go. (Chuckles)

FK: What kind of work did you do?

KO: The cane in the cane fields was planted in lines like this, right? Well, I would go in there and do hō hana. There were big weeds like you see around here growing by the roadside. I would hō hana them all.

FK: What would you wear?

KO: Just the clothes I had brought from Japan--monpe. And then after I came here I sewed a dress and would wear that.

FK: Would you pack a lunch?

KO: Yes, I'd pack a lunch.

FK: What sort of things would you make?

KO: Oh, rice with a few boiled vegetables or something.

FK: Who did you work with?

KO: Oh, "too much men" [most people] who had coffee land would come to work. The ones who had their own coffee lands had to do their own [work] during coffee time [coffee season], but at other times they would work elsewhere.

FK: Would other women go, too?

KO: Yes. I would go with Mrs. Ikeda and the others.

FK: Would you talk about different things while you worked?

KO: You say while we worked, but when we worked we just worked. When we were done we would go home.

FK: Wouldn't you talk about different things with the other women?

KO: Well, we would just work and do hō hana as hard as we could. (Chuckles)

FK: About how much money would you get when you did hō hana?

KO: When we did hō hana one day was fifty cents, so if you went for a long time [many days] you got more money and if you just went for a little while you only got a little money.

FK: But it was different for men and women, wasn't it? Why was . . .

KO: For men it was seventy-five cents--for women, fifty cents. The women were here and the men were over here.

FK: Were you working at the same job as Mr. Okano [your husband] then?

KO: Yes. He was working in the cane fields, too.

FK: Was there a luna there?

KO: Well, the luna would just tell us, "Do over here," or "Do over there," that's all. "Today do here and here." That's all he would do.

FK: Who was he?

KO: Just some man from the company would do it.

FK: What race was the luna?

KO: [KO does not understand.] The luna? The lunas--there were four or five of them who would come to check the cane fields together. They were the lunas.

FK: But were there only Japanese there?

KO: Oh yes, only Japanese. Ujimori-san and a number of others. There were three or four of them.

FK: What was the name of the company?

KO: Oh, I don't remember.

FK: Who did you get the money from?

KO: Ujimori-san and the others would take care of it and pay us. Ujimori-san was the main boss. There were three or four in the company.

FK: From when until when did you work in the cane fields?

KO: Oh, about a year, I guess.

FK: All year?

KO: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-21-2-80 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kame Okano (K0)

December 10, 1980

Keauhou, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Faye Komagata (FK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Paul Scott Lehman.]

FK: You said that you moved to Honalo about 1911, but how did you get hold of any property?

K0: There was a person in Honalo who had coffee land. We bought seven acres of coffee land from that person. And then we grew lots of coffee for a long time.

FK: Was it on a lease?

K0: It was lease land.

FK: I see. For how many years?

K0: It was leased for about ten years, and then when the time came, they leased it to us again.

FK: How much was it?

K0: We bought it for \$200, seven acres.

FK: Whose land was it?

K0: The land belonged to Shipman in Hilo, but the coffee were Fuji-san's. He had a contract with them and then made a contract [sub-lease] with us.

FK: What was your daily life like?

K0: From early in the morning every day, we would do hō hana, or pick coffee, and work hard to take care of all the coffee land.

FK: Did you grow other things, too?

KO: Other than that we only grew a few vegetables.

FK: What kinds of vegetables?

KO: Oh, what do you call it? Onions, carrots, beans, things like that.

FK: Would you use them at home?

KO: Yes, we would use them at home.

FK: Would you grind the coffee yourselves?

KO: Coffee is a small fruit, you see, so we had to get up early in the morning and pick the little things, one at a time. Sometimes we'd get one bag in one day, sometimes we'd pick two bags. We'd save that up for three days and then grind it. Run it through a machine and grind it. Then we'd mix it with water and the next morning we'd wash it and put it on the drying racks to dry for about a week. The patchi [parchment coffee] that was dried like that was about five dollars a bag. Because it was back then and the price was so low, it was hard to save money, but we picked coffee with all our might.

The machine? There was a machine that would grind it up. We would save up three-days' worth and grind it, then put it in water and let it soak, and then put it up on the drying racks to dry the following morning. We would dry it for a week and make it into patchi, and that patchi was about five dollars a bag.

FK: Who did that work?

KO: Okano and I did it all. When we picked, we would hire a lot of people--kanakas--and pick. Because the two of us couldn't pick it all.

FK: Were the people you hired . . .

KO: At first the people we hired were all kanakas from the seashore who would come and pick one bag for fifty cents for us. And then later, since there weren't kanakas around, from here and there we hired schoolchildren or people who had some time and would pick it. And people would come from the plantation in Honokaa and pick for us during koppe time [coffee season].

FK: Who was that?

KO: Eh? Oh, Filipinos--Filipinos from the plantation.

FK: About how many did you hire?

KO: Oh, as many as five or six people--five or six, or even more than that.

FK: How did you pay them?

KO: In the beginning we paid fifty cents a bag, but then it gradually went up until it was about eighty cents.

FK: Was there a place to stay--other than the money, was there a place [for the workers] to stay?

KO: Yes. We made a little room in our house underneath the drying platform and put the Filipinos in there. We gave them kaukau for a quarter [twenty-five cents] for one day, and they would pick koppe for us.

FK: Who made the kaukau?

KO: I did. I would make it and be the cook. Sometimes there were as many as ten people because there were ten in our family. Eight children, with us [KO and husband] made ten. Sometimes there were as many as four or five Filipinos there, so it was too much men [a large gathering].

FK: What sort of foods would you serve at times like that?

KO: Oh, I'd make some rice, and sometimes I'd boil some fish or vegetables, or make some soup. We'd get by with that.

FK: That must have been hard, what kind of vehicles did you use?

KO: Vehicles? What do you mean?

FK: What would you load the coffee onto?

KO: Donkeys--we would load it on a donkey. In the old days we had donkeys, and we had what were called kēkake, too. We would load it on a donkey and bring about two bags down from the mountain each time and spread it on the grinding racks. We would save it up like that for three days and then grind it and put it up to dry.

FK: How many donkeys did you have?

KO: We had one donkey . . . one. It could carry about two bags at one time, so it would go back and forth, back and forth, for as many times as there was some.

FK: And where would you take the parchment coffee?

KO: We would take the coffee to [American] Factors, or to the store--(phrase unclear). At first to Factors.

FK: What about your shopping?

KO: We did the shopping at Factors, too. We would do all the shopping at Factors. We would buy rice and everything and save up the stubs [charge everything] until koppe time [coffee season] when we would

get the koppe and take it down and pay. Some people didn't have enough [coffee to pay their bill]. Some people got enough so that they had some left over, and they would get money.

FK: What about your household?

KO: We had some left over and would get money. Some people didn't have enough, and would just keep going [into debt to Factors] for four or five years. Until by-and-by they couldn't pay, so Factors let them be pau [cancelled their debts]. That was when koppe was cheap.

FK: That was during the 1930s, wasn't it?

KO: Let me see, when would that have been? It was quite a while ago. We started in about 1910, and in . . . '20 . . . and '30 . . . yes, and in '40. It lasted for about thirty years, I think.

FK: Could you tell us about the house in Honalo?

KO: At the house in Honalo at that time there were two drying platforms of 20 by 40 feet and 18 by 30 feet that were used for drying. We lived down below the drying racks.

FK: What about the rooms?

KO: The rooms--there was a place to stack the koppe and a place to sleep. It was a very big room--because as many as ten people slept in it. It was about 20 by 40 feet or so. We all managed to sleep in there. Two rooms--koppe and a bedroom. Very big rooms.

FK: What about a kitchen?

KO: Oh, there was a kitchen next to the room--a small kitchen.

FK: What kinds of things did you have there?

KO: In the kitchen we just had a place made out of stones where we could put a pot and cook rice by burning dried coffee wood that we had brought. There was no electricity or anything at all like that. At night we only had [kerosene] lamps.

FK: Up until when was it like that?

KO: Oh, back then 10, 20, 30, 40--until about 1940. Yes, it was 1940. It was when we came here [Keauhou] that we finally got electricity.

FK: What did you do about water?

KO: We would get it from the roof and put it in these two big tanks. We kept a lot of water saved up for both using [ourselves] and for washing the coffee.

- FK: Were there times when there wasn't any water?
- KO: Yes. When the weather was good there were times when it got a little bit low, but we would economize at times like that and just use a little bit at a time, so that we had enough to get by.
- FK: Could you tell us about your family now? Did you have any problems in the family? . . . What about during childbirth? Did someone come to help?
- KO: No, no problems especially. During childbirth father [KO's husband, Waichi] helped me have the child.
- FK: You had 11 children, didn't you?
- KO: But there were the ones who died--the ones who lived . . .
- FK: At the time of childbirth, what preparations--what sort of things would you prepare? . . . Hot water, or some cloth . . .
- KO: We would put warm water in a big washtub, and father would wash up for me. Father was the midwife.
- FK: Which school in Kona did your children go to?
- KO: The children went to the Keauhou School at first. Then when they got to be in high school they went to Konawaena.
- FK: Did they go to Japanese school, too?
- KO: They went to Japanese school at first. They went up until the eighth grade, or to an upper level. English school was for eight years, and Japanese school was for eight years. When they were through with those eight years they came to Konawaena [School].
- FK: Did you pay for the Japanese school?
- KO: Yes. We would pay a certain amount each month. It was so much for one, or so much for three [children]. We would hire the teacher and pay a monthly tuition. Everyone studied very hard at Japanese school back then. The parents made every effort to have them go there. So even if he didn't like it, a child's parents would holler at him if he didn't do his best. That's why even now the Japanese can write very well.
- FK: How much did it cost? Do you remember?
- KO: Yeah . . . it didn't cost that much. At first, when they built the Japanese school, all the parents got together and put up \$100 or \$200 and built the Japanese school. After that, it was just the monthly tuition, so it didn't cost much.

FK: But you had ten children, didn't you?

KO: Yes. There were always eight who went to school.

FK: Would your children walk when they went to school?

KO: Yes, they would walk. It was a long time ago, so they went bare-foot. The boys in short pants like this [motions], everyone bare-foot.

FK: What would they do when it rained?

KO: When it rained they would take an umbrella. Every time it looked like rain they had to take an umbrella. They had to take their books and an umbrella, and like that.

FK: And what would they do when it was cold?

KO: Oh, when it was cold they would just wear a sweater and go.

FK: Did you buy things like that, too?

KO: Yes. We got those at the store.

FK: What sort of entertainments did you have? Did you do anything as a family?

KO: Uh--nothing special, really. How do you say it? We would play songs on the gramophone. That was about it.

FK: What would you do at times like that?

KO: At times like that everyone would just listen to songs sung on the gramophone sometimes, and learn them and try and sing them. That's about all.

FK: Would you go to the temple?

KO: Yes. We would always go to the temple. For Nehan-e in February, or the Hanamatsuri [Buddha Day] in April, or Bon, we would always go to the temple, and those of us in the fujin-kai [women's association] would cook. Then we would listen to the sermon and go back home.

FK: You told us before about the first Buddhist minister at Daifukuji, didn't you?

KO: The very first minister was Rev. Kodama.

FK: At that time, how did Rev. Kodama . . .

KO: When we had just come over and were still new men and didn't have anything, Rev. Kodama came there to Obayashi-san's place and everyone would stop by. He gave sermons and everyone listened. He

wanted to build a small temple, but it seemed that he didn't have the money. Most people said that we didn't need a temple because we had Hongwanji, but Rev. Kodama wanted to somehow build a temple. So he got quarter [twenty-five cents] or fifty cent donations--not many people would give a dollar.

Because those donations weren't enough, he went to a plantation in Ka'u and got a few more donations there. At that time, when Rev. Kodama went to Ka'u riding on a donkey, he hurt himself here. So then he went Hilo and got a little bit from the plantation in Hilo.

Then with just a little money he managed somehow to build a small temple. It was a little smaller than what they have now. It was on a kanaka's land. He built a small temple.

FK: That was about 1914, wasn't it?

KO: Let me see, that was when we came and were new men, so . . . wait a minute, we came in 1907, so . . .

FK: Were you in Honalo then?

KO: Yes. That was after we went to Honalo. I think it was . . . about 1914.

FK: What would you do when it was a special occasion, or when you didn't have to work? What kinds of things did you do?

KO: Back then, uh--well, when you say special occasion--Tenchō-setsu was a special occasion. Everyone would go to the temple and have the Tenchō-setsu service, and then we would take our time about going home. And then at home, aikānes from here and there would come by--friends would come by--and we'd have Tenchō-setsu. That was about it.

FK: What would you wear?

KO: Oh, a coat and pants. Because they were celebrating Tenchō-setsu they would wear cost and pants.

FK: And the women?

KO: The women? Oh, they would wear a pretty dress. It was mostly men though, since it was a ceremonial occasion.

FK: Did you also make clothes for your children to wear?

KO: Yes, well, the only things the children had to wear were their regular clothes and the clothes they would wear to go to the temple--two outfits. One that they would wear to school, and one that they would occasionally wear to go to the temple. It was a long time ago, so we just didn't have much to wear.

Yeah...in the old days we would make two shirts and two pants for each one who went to school. They would wear one shirt and one pair of pants for a week. Then the next week they would wear the others again for a week. They wouldn't change them every day like they do now. They would wear them for a week at a time. On Saturday there was only Japanese school, and even if they were dirty somewhere they would wear them anyway.

In the old days it was very ...there was so much work for the parents--koppe field work--that we couldn't find time to do laundry very much.

FK: Did you children help out around the house?

KO: Yes. All the children, from the older ones...once the oldest girl was in school--there were five younger girls--she would wash the shirts and underpants for those five for me. I would just wash the kanaka--wear that they wore on top and starch and iron it. The oldest girl really had a rough time doing too much laundry. She suffered the most.

FK: Did the children do other work, too?

KO: Yes. When they got home from school--because they had a half-day of school on Saturdays--they would do hō hana in the afternoon. Only on Sunday could they study, or do their own laundry.

FK: What about the beach? And fishing? Would the children go out anywhere to play?

KO: Very rarely. Occasionally--about once a year--we would go to the beach.

FK: What about when you picked coffee?

KO: When we picked coffee everyone would get up while it was still dark, and wait for it to get light and pick with all our might. When they got older some of them would pick one bag in one day. The little ones--some of them would pick a half bag, some would pick a quarter bag. They would all kōkua and pick koppe. Even when it rained they would wear their raincoats and pick koppe from the morning.

FK: Raincoats?

KO: Yes, we would make the raincoats at home.

FK: How would you make them?

KO: We would sew them out of heavy cloth and put linseed oil on them about two times or so. We would put oil on them and then dry them and get them out and wear them when it rained.

- FK: You said that in the beginning you intended to come to Hawaii and stay for about ten years, but what became of that?
- KO: I left telling my father that I would come back home to Japan in about ten years, but with the children being born one every two years...we could make lots of children, but because koppe was cheap we couldn't make money. So we couldn't go back to Japan. Koppe was cheap, we had lots of children, and we couldn't go back to Japan, so we decided not to go back to Japan.
- FK: How did you feel about that at the time?
- KO: Eh? Well, we had so many children, and we couldn't go back to Japan, so we put our parents' minds at rest and told them that we intended to live in Hawaii for the rest of our lives.
- FK: And did you both resign yourselves to that?
- KO: Yes, everybody gave up.
- FK: Were you ever able to go to Japan after that?
- KO: Because we couldn't go back to Japan, we became American citizens. So the people in Japan were relieved that we became American citizens and cut our Japanese registry.
- FK: Could you tell us a little about the area around Honalo? What kind of a place it was . . .
- KO: The land in Honalo?
- FK: No, the neighborhood around Honalo--the stores, the things they used to have in Honalo in the old days. Could you please tell us a little about that?
- KO: In Honalo in the old days, Kaneko-san was next door, and there was Deguchi-san and Miyata-san. That was about it as far as neighborhood.
- FK: What about the road?
- KO: The road? We were way down below, so to get to the road up above took at least ten minutes or fifteen minutes. And the way up was very rocky and hard to walk on.
- FK: Did you sometimes do things together with the people in the neighborhood?
- KO: Nothing really. Just maybe if one of the children had grown up and was getting married, then everyone would get together and make something good to eat, and we would send our bride off to them.

FK: What was a wedding celebration like in the old days?

KO: For weddings in the old days everyone in the neighborhood would get together and make something good to eat. Everyone would eat and then send them off. Then there would be more food later. They would have theirs and we would have ours.

FK: Separately?

KO: Because we were the ones who were sending her off, and they were the ones who were taking her in.

FK: Did everyone have a good time? What would they do?

KO: After everybody sang as hard as they could--after they clapped and sang they would eat good food and have fun.

FK: Did you make tsukemono, too?

KO: Yes. In the old days we would take daikon or cabbage and put them in a big soy sauce barrel with a big weight on top and make it.

FK: What about meat and fish?

KO: Well, we would sometimes have fish. The kanakas from down below might bring some up--because there were some up above, too--and we would sometimes buy fish. You could also get a little meat if you ordered it from Greenwell, and they would deliver it. Also, if you went up every week on Tuesday then you could buy some. But if you didn't go up to the main road and buy it, then you couldn't buy any.

FK: Which stores would you do your shopping at?

KO: I would buy from Ushijima Store and Sasaki Store.

FK: How would you get hold of cash money?

KO: We would keep the money that we got when we sold the koppe and use it for everything all during the year.

FK: What did you do when times were bad?

KO: Well, when times were bad we would buy our kaukau at Factors, and take them all our koppe when we had some. When there was some left over then we would get money and keep it, and use a little at a time to buy whatever was needed.

FK: But you hired people, didn't you? how did you pay them? Cash?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

FK: How did you get hold of the land in Keauhou?

KO: It was good land that we bought from Mrs. [Rose] Falconer. Twelve acres with lots of guava trees--big guava trees. That's what we bought. Then we dug up all the guava, and made big pukas and planted coffee.

FK: Who did the work?

KO: Okano and I and some people that we hired did it all.

FK: That was around 1940, wasn't it?

KO: Uh---Yes, around 1935.

FK: Did you buy it [the land] all at once when you bought it?

KO: We bought it in two times. At first we bought down below, uh--just five acres or so, I think. Then we bought the guava land the second time. We bought 12 acres in two times.

FK: Why did you buy it? Why did you want to buy this place?

KO: If you had lease land and the lease became no more then landowners wouldn't renew the lease. If you had lots of children and then you didn't get the lease, they wouldn't have any place to go. But if you have good land then you can stay there forever, so you buy good land.

FK: What happened to Honalo?

KO: We sold the place in Honalo. We sold it to another person.

FK: Did your children come with you when you came to the land here [Keauhou]?

KO: Yes. We made that drying house over there and brought all our children with us and came.

FK: The children were big, weren't they?

KO: Five of the children went to college, so there were three others. There were three when we came here.

FK: That was when you were already in your fifties, wasn't it? What kind of work did you do when you came here?

KO: After coming here, we opened up the guava land, planted coffee, and kept on growing coffee. We threw ourselves into work--hō hana growing coffee.

FK: And your children were in college . . .

KO: Yes. At that time the big children had left already. There were only three here.

FK: Did you pay the tuition when they went to college, too?

KO: Yes. We would pay tuition every month. When they first went in we would pay about \$200 or so, and then we would send something every month for kaukau.

FK: Were you and Mr. Okano both well?

KO: Yes. We were healthy all along, and worked as hard as we could. That's why it was good.

FK: Did you build this house, too?

KO: Yes, we built it.

FK: What happened at the time of the war [World War II]? What effects did the war have?

KO: Let me see--we were still in the upper house Keauhou at the time of the war. After the war was over we built this place.

FK: There were soldiers around here, too, weren't there?

KO: Here and there on the roads sometimes. So I wouldn't go out on the road much around then.

FK: What about Mr. Okano?

KO: It was nothing but coffee field work every time. The only times we would go out on the road was to go to Sasaki Store to buy kaukau.

FK: Your son went in the army, too, didn't he? To war?

KO: Yes. When he was young--at 18--he went.

FK: Did you go to Japan?

KO: Yes, I went to Japan one time.

FK: When was that?

KO: Uh--let me see now--around 1940.

FK: What did you think?

KO: Uh, well, when I went to Japan I went to my family's place, and the house I was born in, and saw my family--my older sisters [-in-law] and younger sisters [-in-law].

FK: What did you feel? What did you think?

KO: Well, going home for the first time in 33 years, and going to my father's grave and putting up a proper memorial. Once I went and did that I felt relieved.

FK: Were there any people still there that you knew?

KO: A few, just a few. My older sister [-in-law], and my niece--just a few. But because it was our first time back in 33 years, Omasu--on Okano's side--Omasu had passed away.

FK: And what did you feel?

KO: Well, uh--just relief that I had wanted and wanted to go to Japan and had finally gone.

FK: Had it changed quite a bit?

KO: Yes, it had changed.

FK: In what way had it changed?

KO: Well, there wasn't really much difference. The fields were just like the old fields, and the house was just the way it used to be. Things hadn't changed that much. But the people I knew had changed or were gone.

FK: Could you tell us a little about the kumiai [cooperative association]?

KO: Uh--When you talk about the kumiai here--if somebody in the house died, then everyone would get together and hold a funeral for them. And then the kumi would make dinner and finish up. Then we would go once a year to Kahaluu Beach for a picnic. That was the biggest treat.

FK: Up until what age did you pick coffee?

KO: Until I was eighty-one. Okano picked koppe until he was ninety-two . . . bag by bag. We would pick one bag together. So we picked like that, but our boys said to quit because it would be dangerous if we fell down, so we quit.

FK: You have lots of nuts planted now, don't you? When did that start?

KO: Oh, the nuts were planted about thirty years ago. Coffee and nuts.

FK: Who takes care of the nuts?

KO: The nuts--well, the younger ones do it.

FK: Which bank did you go to in the old days--and now?

KO: The Hawaii Bank and the credit union.

FK: How was the credit union in the beginning?

KO: It was after World War II that we started going there. It wasn't there in the beginning.

FK: After you came here to this area [Keauhou], where did you take your coffee?

KO: To [American] Factors.

FK: What about the co-op--the Sunset Coffee Mill?

KO: At first we took it to Factors, and then we took it there. Now we take it all there. Factors was a long time ago, now it's all over there [at Sunset].

FK: Why did you change?

KO: Because Factors quit.

FK: So you don't grind the cherry [coffee]?

KO: No, we don't grind it. We used to grind it in the beginning, but since they built the mill and started taking red koppe--in the beginning we would bring it down from the mountain, keep it three days, grind it all, put it up on the drying racks for about a week, and dry it and do it like that. Made into patchi like that one bag was. In the beginning it was cheap, but later on it got a little better. We would grind it and make it into patchi and sell it.

FK: How many grandchildren do you have?

KO: Grandchildren? I have 18.

FK: Do you have any great-grandchildren?

KO: Eighteen grandchildren and twenty-two great-grandchildren.

END OF INTERVIEW

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